

ABSTRACT OF REPORT

WALDENSIAN COMMISSION OF ITALIAN EVANGELIZATION.

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There is one more thing in connection with your report, in the hope of obtaining from you the same kind of witness to which you have for many years been accustomed.

And first of all, allow me to say, "Thank you for a thousand times thank you," for your report. It is a most interesting and useful document, and we have

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1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398	2399	2400	2401	2402	2403	2404	2405	2406	2407	2408	2409	2410	2411	2412	2413	2414	2415	2416	2417	2418	2419	2420	2421	2422	2423	2424	2425	2426	2427	2428	2429	2430	2431	2432	2433	2434	2435	2436	2437	2438	2439	2440	2441	2442	2443	2444	2445	2446	2447	2448	2449	2450	2451	2452	2453	2454	2455	2456	2457	2458	2459	2460	2461	2462	2463	2464	2465	2466	2467	2468	2469	2470	2471	2472	2473	2474	2475	2476	2477	2478	2479	2480	2481	2482	2483	2484	2485	2486	2487	2488	2489	2490	2491	2492	2493	2494	2495	2496	2497	2498	2499	2500	2501	2502	2503	2504	2505	2506	2507	2508	2509	2510	2511	2512	2513	2514	2515	2516	2517	2518	2519	2520	2521	2522	2523	2524	2525	2526	2527	2528	2529	2530	2531	2532	2533	2534	2535	2536	2537	2538	2539	2540	2541	2542	2543	2544	2545	2546	2547	2548	2549	2550	2551	2552	2553	2554	2555	2556	2557	2558	2559	2560	2561	2562	2563	2564	2565	2566	2567	2568	2569	2570	2571	2572	2573	2574	2575	2576	2577	2578	2579	2580	2581	2582	2583	2584	2585	2586	2587	2588	2589	2590	2591	2592	2593	2594	2595	2596	2597	2598	2599	2600	2601	2602	2603	2604	2605	2606	2607	2608	2609	2610	2611	2612	2613	2614	2615	2616	2617	2618	2619	2620	2621	2622	2623	2624	2625	2626	2627	2628	2629	2630	2631	2632	2633	2634	2635	2636	2637	2638	2639	2640	2641	2642	2643	2644	2645	2646	2647	2648	2649	2650	2651	2652	2653	2654	2655	2656	2657	2658	2659	2660	2661	2662	2663	2664	2665	2666	2667	2668	2669	2670	2671	2672	2673	2674	2675	2676	2677	2678	2679	2680	2681	2682	2683	2684	2685	2686	2687	2688	2689	2690	2691	2692	2693	2694	2695	2696	2697	2698	2699	2700	2701	2702	2703	2704	2705	2706	2707	2708	2709	2710	2711	2712	2713	2714	2715	2716	2717	2718	2719	2720	2721	2722	2723	2724	2725	2726	2727	2728	2729	2730	2731	2732	2733	2734	2735	2736	2737	2738	2739	2740	2741	2742	2743	2744	2745	2746	2747	2748	2749	2750	2751	2752	2753	2754	2755	2756	2757	2758	2759	2760	2761	2762	2763	2764	2765	2766	2767	2768	2769	2770	2771	2772	2773	2774	2775	2776	2777	2778	2779	2780	2781	2782	2783	2784	2785	2786	2787	2788	2789	2790	2791	2792	2793	2794	2795	2796	2797	2798	2799	2800	2801	2802	2803	2804	2805	2806	2807	2808	2809	2810	2811	2812	2813	2814	2815	2816	2817	2818	2819	2820	2821	2822	2823	2824	2825	2826	2827	2828	2829	2830	2831	2832	2833	2834	2835	2836	2837	2838	2839	2840	2841	2842	2843	2844	2845	2846	2847	2848	2849	2850	2851	2852	2853	2854	2855	2856	2857	2858	2859	2860	2861	2862	2863	2864	2865	2866	2867	2868	2869	2870	2871	2872	2873	2874	2875	2876	2877	2878	2879	2880	2881	2882	2883	2884	2885	2886	2887	2888	2889	2890	2891	2892	2893	2894	2895	2896	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ABSTRACT OF REPORT

OF THE

WALDENSIAN COMMISSION OF ITALIAN EVANGELIZATION.

BELOVED FRIENDS,

Here we are once again knocking at your door, in the hope of obtaining from you the same kind welcome to which you have for many years accustomed us.

And, first of all, allow us to say, "Thank you, a thousand times thank you !" for your valuable co-operation. You have accompanied your generous gifts with your prayers, and we have experienced the happy result, as you will learn in reading the pages of this report. We would much rather say to you, "Come and see for yourselves what has been done ;" but as that cannot be, we shall try to give you as exact and as brief an account of the work as we can. You will find at the end an extended statistical table of the whole work, but here is a short *vidimus*, enabling one to compare the results of this year with the last :—

	1882.	1883.
Hearers on Sundays,	5214	6092
Members,	3421	3616
Admissions during the year,	492	541
Catechumens up to 30th June,	378	488
Pupils in Day Schools,	1860	1990
Sunday Scholars,	1973	2044
Scholars in Evening Schools,	392	463
Contributions to the Central or Sustentation Fund,	Fr., 6393 (about £256)	Fr., 9269 (about £371)

The total of the contributions of the Churches has been 51,462 francs (about £2058, 10s.) :—less, we regret to say, than last year ; but this is explained by the fact that last year the Church at Milan made a special effort in order to furnish its place of worship.

In fact, our progress as a whole has been a little in advance of

the past year : although, alas ! it is very small, if one considers the road yet to be traversed. Such as it is, however, it is of immense importance to us, inasmuch as it proves that our God—the God of our Fathers—has been with us. Without Him, we heartily acknowledge we could not have maintained our position at all in the unequal warfare against enemies so numerous and powerful. Through His grace we have been enabled to add 540 new members, of whom about a half have been rescued from Infidelity or Superstition. To Him, therefore, the all-powerful and good God—to the adorable Saviour—be honour, praise, and glory for ever and ever : Amen.

We spoke at length in our report last year of aggressive work, and of the progress made in public opinion. We have, this year again, employed every means in our power to attract hearers to our Halls, as well as to reach those who will not enter them. Our younger readers can hardly understand the difficulties we have had to overcome, in order to reach the point we have already gained ; for their benefit we may be allowed to describe two scenes, very dissimilar, which occurred in the same little town at an interval of twenty-two years.

A Night at Rio Marina (Elba) in 1861.

It was summer ; the sea breeze, cooling the air which the sun's rays had rendered scorching, made a delightful evening. Millions of stars in the dark blue of the skies were mirrored in the calm and limpid waves, which murmured softly on the shores of Rio. All nature was fitted to raise the soul to God. But alas ! the inhabitants of the little town had no eyes to admire the works of their Creator. They were running in crowds in one direction, crying and gesticulating like madmen. The words most easily gathered, because most often repeated, were "*Fuori, Morte,*" "Out with him ! to death with him !" The crowd, at length reaching a certain house, surrounded it, and shouted more and more loudly, whilst some men eagerly heaped up fagots against the walls and doors. There is no longer any doubt, they are going to burn the house. But what could it contain which has excited the passions of the people to so high a pitch ? Some one infected with the plague ? A prisoner escaped from the prison of Porto Ferraio ? No ; that house shelters a divinity-student of the Waldensian Church, who has come to Rio with a friend to preach the Gospel. Happily, God did not allow His servants to perish by so horrible a death, nor the page of history, already so soiled by Romish fanaticism, to have another sanguinary blot. He touched the hearts of some men of influence, who succeeded in calming the poor fanatics, and rescuing our friends from certain death. Had we been eye-witnesses of this scene, we would have said, "Here at least is a spot where the

Waldensians need not attempt to promulgate the Faith of their Fathers." Well, let us return to Rio after twenty-two years have come and gone;

A Day at Rio in 1883.

It is the 16th of August, the festival of Saint Roch, patron of the locality. A numerous cortège, headed by the band of the little town, is on its way towards a neighbouring height. Is it the shrine of the Saint to whom this crowd desires to render homage? No, for the band plays slow and solemn melodies, and the people who form the procession wear a serious and thoughtful air. It is a funeral. And whose departure are the population of Rio thus mourning? An Evangelical, a member of the Waldensian Church of Rio! The crowd fill the Cemetery, and while they uncover their heads respectfully, listen with attention to the reading and preaching of the Word of God. You might fancy yourself in a Protestant country; yet the greater part of these people are still Roman Catholics, and probably some of these very men had cried, "Death to the Protestants" some years before. How wonderful the contrast!

Yes, notwithstanding the apparent sterility of the soil, the seed has germinated and grown, and the blast of persecution has but caused it to take stronger and deeper root. The Church of Rio Marino at present contains eighty-eight members, the number being reduced because several have emigrated to Leghorn, Nice, and other places; but its influence has extended to hundreds of persons, and on the benches of its Schools two-thirds of the rising generation are to be found. Out of 184 children who frequented them during the last year, more than a hundred have Roman Catholic parents.

And, beyond that Commune, a petition has reached the Committee from Rio Castello, signed by heads of families, desirous of entrusting to us the instruction and education of seventy-two children!

But now, let me relate another contrast, more striking still:—

9th September 1560 at Rome.

On Monday, the 9th September 1560 (so writes a historian), an agitated and curious crowd pressed toward the square of the Castle of Saint Angelo, where a scaffold and a pile of wood beside it were prepared. At a short distance arose an amphitheatre with richly decorated steps, on which were seated "his Holiness" the Pope, "the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth," with Cardinals, Inquisitors, Priests and Monks of every order. When the Martyr for the truth as it is in Jesus appeared, weighed down by his chains, his enemies, who were watching every gesture and the play of his countenance, ready to triumph at the least weakness, dis-

covered in his features neither change or fear. He wore the same sweet and resigned attitude he had maintained during his long and painful imprisonment. Reaching the scaffold, he profited by a moment of silence to declare to the people that if he died it was for no crime he had committed, but for having dared to confess the doctrine of his divine Master and Saviour Jesus Christ. "As for those," he continued, "who hold the Pope as God on earth, and Vicar of Jesus Christ, they are strangely mistaken, since he shows himself the enemy of His doctrine, of His true service, and of pure religion; and his acts proclaim him Anti-Christ." He was unable to say more; the Inquisitors gave the signal, and the executioner strangled him! his body, thrown on the pile, was reduced to ashes, and the ashes cast into the Tiber. The martyr was Giovanni Ludovico Pascale, a Waldensian pastor. So ended that sad but memorable day.

The 25th November 1883, at Rome.

On leaving the Piazza Venezia, you enter the principal thoroughfare of Rome, the Via Nazionale; follow it to the point where it turns sharp to the right, and stop before that building at the corner. The marble cross which surmounts it might, perhaps, make you think it a Roman Catholic Church, but the inscription over the large door would quickly undeceive you. "*There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" No, the Romish Church would never choose these words, apostolic though they be. Above the inscription, the device,—a candle placed on a Bible and surrounded by the motto, "*Lux lucet in Tenebris,*"—distinctly indicates that you may enter with the assurance of finding yourself among friends and brethren. There is a crowd in the church. Look at the speaker and listen:—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He has good cause to proclaim these words which St Paul wrote to the Romans, for he is a Waldensian Pastor, and, if it was for the gospel that Pascale was burnt, it is because that gospel is the power of God, that he who now preaches is able to proclaim it freely in this very Rome, whence the cruel order so often went forth to destroy the Waldensian Church. Wonderful! is it not? A Waldensian Pastor, surrounded by Waldensian Pastors, assembled from all parts of Italy to dedicate to the worship of God a *Waldensian Church in Rome!*

And the Pope? what of him? A prisoner by his own choice in his splendid palace, he has still so much modesty left that he dreads coming forth to encounter in the streets that same gospel that he banished from his capital during so many centuries. What a change! Since we were the first to enter Rome in 1870, how comes it, some may enquire, that we are the last to possess a church there? I shall explain that. In 1872 the Rev. Dr

Stewart of Leghorn, the indefatigable friend to whom not merely the Waldensian Church, but Italian Evangelization, owe so much, had purchased for us a house in the Corso contiguous to the church of "*Caravita*." Religious service being therein suspended, the Government was expected to sell this famous church as it had done others. The acquisition of a house with a story immediately above the peristyle suggested the idea of buying the church itself. Unfortunately, this was refused, Government ordering religious services to be resumed. There being no hope in that quarter, the hunt after a site then commenced, and the one where the church now stands, after a long, weary search, was found, and bought. Still, our troubles were not ended. We had dug 14 metres deep to lay the foundations, and they had scarcely reached the level of the soil, when a Religious Brotherhood, the walls of whose church touch our ground, arrested our progress by a legal action, on the plea that we had no right to build so close to their place of worship.

Adverse decisions of the "*Tribunale di prima istanza*," and of the Court of Appeal, sent us to the Court of Cassation, where, the decision of the inferior courts being reversed, we were in 1882 sent back to the Court of Appeal of Ancona. At that period, Dr Stewart, tired, naturally, of protracted litigation, left the matter entirely in our own hands. On the strength of the favourable sentence of the Court of Cassation, we found it possible to settle matters with the opposing confraternity, and proceed in the erection of the edifice. Of course these interruptions, and this protracted lawsuit, cost a deal of money, and the church, now finished, leaves us with a debt of 150,000 francs, £6000, a heavy sum, which would terrify us altogether, were it not that the house bought for us by Dr Stewart, is of higher value. Why not then sell the house and pay our debt? For the following reasons, which we tell quite frankly.

1. Colonel Montgomerie Neilson, a devoted Scotch friend, has lent us that sum at a rate of interest so moderate, that we can pay it easily from the rental of the house.

2. We now wait to see what the Lord has ordained for us. How do we know that He will not put into the heart of some other of His children to complete the work of Dr Stewart? He has given us the church, but if the debt on it were paid off, the house being still ours, we should, from the rent obtained from it, have enough to defray the expenses of our Mission in Rome, and to strengthen our position there. Nay, if the work were to extend so that another place of worship were required (God grant it may), we should have the means to erect it too. For this reason, we think we are not doing wrong in leaving it open to friends, to whom the Lord may suggest the idea to render permanent the work of the Waldensian church in Rome, and even to provide for its future extension.

It has been said that our Church is rather *too* handsome ! Well it is different, indeed, from our small erections in the valleys ; but those to whom we are best known, will readily believe that pride had nothing to do with this ; in fact, the church was planned for us by Dr Stewart himself. Besides, there is only one Rome. Therein beats the heart of Italy. Therein beats the heart of the Papacy. It was evident to us, and to those who understand our countrymen thoroughly, that in Rome a church was required in harmony with the refined taste of Italians, and their ideas regarding a place of worship. This is simply one means among others we consider ourselves bound to use with the view of reaching that upper class of society that has hitherto eluded us. After all, we never forget that such things are only helps for a higher end.

We therefore beseech you to redouble your prayers for us. We have done our best to attract and retain the hearers, but we know well that all will be vain without the Divine blessing. Oh, dear friends, we entreat your prayers this year above all, and more especially for Rome. We ask them in the words of St Paul. Rom. xv. 30. "Now, we beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with us in your prayers to God for us." The Committee of Evangelisation has ordered the transference of its President, the Rev. Signor Prochet, and family to Rome. Their residence is above the church, 107 Via Nazionale.

We promised in last Report to give some details this year of a quiet but important work, namely, Colportage.

Our Colporteurs, the "*Pioneers of Evangelization*," as they are justly designated, have specially difficult work in Italy. We enjoin them, and also the Scripture readers, to enquire after what is done with the books they have sold. This takes time, but it is time well spent. "I increasingly appreciate the reasons for your exacting from us that we visit such persons as have bought books from us." Thus wrote one of our best Colporteurs a few months ago. Let me give one or two extracts from their reports :—"Early in August, I met Signor Alba, and offered him some books ; after some hesitation he purchased a Bible and the Biography of Luigi Desanctis. Observing a confusion in his mind as to the distinction between Christianity and Popery, I insisted on the great doctrine of free salvation by the blood of Christ (Rom. v. 1, x. 34, xi. 6 ; Ephes. ii., 8, 9, etc.). This conversation seems to have borne some fruit, for some days later, this same gentleman returned to the town (Savigliano) with his wife and daughter. As soon as he saw me he invited me to come near. 'Here are my wife and daughter,' said he, 'I have brought them here that you may speak to them of the Saviour as you did to me the other day.' Need I add that I did so with joy, asking God Himself to suggest what I ought to say ?

"I drew near with my books to a pretty country house (palazzina), at the door of which were seated the owners, enjoying the cool of the evening, 'What do you want? What are you doing here?' said the master to me, somewhat crossly. 'I have some good and beautiful books which I can sell you cheap.' 'No, no, no, *no!*' . . . and the voice which was raised at each successive negative, presaged something more than a refusal. On this, the lady, who had taken up an almanack, 'L'Amico di Casa,' interposed by asking me the price of the little volume. I told her; and she paid it. After which, taking a New Testament she said, 'This book is a Protestant one.' 'No, madam, it is a Christian book.' 'Christian, if you like; but you cannot deny that it is read and used by the Protestants.' 'But does that prove that the book itself is Protestant?' 'The name of Diodati is obnoxious to my ears.' 'Diodati, madam, as well as the Archbishop Martini, are only translators; the Author of the book is God Himself; see,' . . . and I was opening the book to read some passages of it to her, when the husband, no longer able to contain himself, took me by the arm and thrust me out with very ungracious words.

"I entered a farmyard just as a man was coming out of it. 'You have Bibles, if I am not mistaken?' 'Yes, Bibles and other books besides, if you will take the trouble of looking at them.' 'No, no, do not open your bag; go away, go away, I wish nothing; I have been taken in once, and that is enough,' saying which, he retreated and left me. I followed him, asking permission to say a few words. 'Say on,' he said; 'but I tell you beforehand that it is useless, I shall buy nothing.' 'Very well, but tell me *how* you have been deceived.' 'How? I bought one of these Bibles some time ago, and a friend of mine, a priest, assured me that it was false, and I believe him, because he is an educated man.' 'Could you point out where the Bible is false?' 'No, for I have not got it now; and, besides, I could not show you the errors it contains, for the priest has not told me where they are, only he declared the Bible was false, and I do not wish to endanger my soul by keeping the book in my house.' I replied as well as I could to this poor man, who had been deceived indeed, but not by him whom he accused of deceit. Though he did not buy the Bible, I succeeded in making him take a book of prayers. I shall return to see this man."

From Piedmont, where these incidents occurred, let us transport ourselves to the Venetian provinces.

"On the 14th of August" (writes another Colporteur) "I was at Marrotica: a score of people surrounded the Bible wagon, listening to the reading of some passages of Holy Scripture. A young girl drew near, examined a New Testament with care, bought it, and went away. Half an hour later she came back to me much

agitated. 'Take back your book, I beseech of you, and return me my money.' 'Why?' 'My mother has ordered me to bring it back, saying that this book is not for young girls.' 'Very well, make a present of it to your father or mother.' 'No, no, take it back, I beg of you; I shall willingly lose half the price.' I did not feel authorized to insist further; took back the book, and restored the money. But what was my surprise to see the girl joined by a priest, who evidently was awaiting at some distance the result of the advice he had given!

"The next day, at Bassano, there was a repetition of the same scene, with a young man who, after having bought a Bible, brought it back to me, saying that the priest had forbidden him to read it. Before, however, taking back the book, I strove to make him understand why he was forbidden to read it. 'You are intelligent enough to judge for yourself; read the book which is the Word of God, and after that, you can get rid of it if you find it evil.' The young man remained in thought for some time, then exclaimed, 'You are right, I *do wish* to read it!' and, after wringing my hand, he went away quite pleased."

Ah! if the priests did not come between the Word of God and these poor people! Is it not as if some one withdrew from the lips of a thirsty traveller a glass of fresh and pure water, to give him instead a tainted draught?

The few facts we have just related (and we could quote many similar ones) will give some idea of what faith, self-denial, love, and courage are needed to carry on the work of the colporteur in Italy. The people who have been spoken to by our colporteurs during the last year, and who have heard something of Divine truth, may be counted by tens of thousands. May we not hope that in many cases the seed of the Kingdom has fallen upon good ground? From year to year opposition diminishes in strength, and those who formerly sympathized with us only in their secret hearts, now begin to say openly what they think. It is no rare thing now, for a stranger to praise the colporteur's books, and induce the bystanders to procure them for themselves. Nay, we have had the great satisfaction of numbering a *priest* among these voluntary defenders and advocates. At Pesaro, in the Roman provinces, the colporteur offered some gospels to a priest, who in place of bursting into invectives as most priests do, took them, and examined them saying, "I do not buy them because I have them already, but I declare that these are good books." Many of the bystanders who heard him, hastened to make purchases. What untold good the priests might do in Italy, if only they acted like this one!

Among the new centres which have been opened to the Gospel is Savigliano, a pretty town of 20,000 inhabitants, two hours distant by rail from Turin. We only began last December, and

already we have thirty hopeful catechumens there. We have sent a pastor, who finds around Savigliano several other towns, such as Cuneo, Alba, etc., in which we have friends and adherents. The Waldensian Church once had flourishing congregations in this part of Piedmont, but they were completely destroyed by the great persecutions of the 15th and 16th centuries. For long, we awaited anxiously some sign to tell us that the time was come to sow anew in these fields watered by the blood of our fathers; and what was our joy, when, in December last, that call came!

But there is another corner in Italy which we have explored this year for the first time, and the news from it has deeply stirred many hearts. We speak of that part of Calabria, colonised by the Waldenses in the 14th century. Our enemies in 1560 believed that they had succeeded in entirely destroying this colony by the emissaries of the inquisition. A small number indeed managed to escape, and to return to the valleys after unheard-of fatigues and sufferings; but it was thought that not a single Waldensian remained in Calabria itself. Some time since a strong desire took possession of Signor Pons, our pastor at Naples, to search whether this really were the case; and in the month of May last he was enabled to go to Calabria, with the assistance of the London Continental Society.

The account of his journey having been published by many journals, we shall not give it here in detail, but we may perhaps be allowed to quote a few sentences from letters which he wrote to the Commission of Evangelization at the time. "I have been for five days in the capital of the original Calabria (Cosenza), whose inhabitants seem to me only half civilized; what will those be of the towns which I yet intend to visit! The Syndic, to whom I had an introduction, received me courteously, and presented me to the Prefect. Thanks to their good offices, the archives of the Commune, the province, and the Bishopric were open to me. Unfortunately, I could discover nothing in them about our colony. The documents have been destroyed . . . I visited the castle where the Waldensian pastor Pascale (or Pasquali, as he is called here) was imprisoned.

"Fuscaldo, to which I next proceeded, is now the chief town of the province. The letters with which I was furnished by the Syndic of Cosenza, have opened all doors to me. The principal gentleman of the place invited me to dinner. For two consecutive evenings, upon the Piazza of the Casino, I addressed a number of people on the history of the Waldenses, and their religious beliefs. Amongst the audience were five priests, who approved all I said. I found many Waldensian names and traditions. Guardia Piemontese, a town of 12,000 inhabitants, is perched on a hill 400 metres in height. The path which leads to it is horrible, but the view from the top magnificent. The population are

distinguished from other Neapolitans by the costume of the women, by the dialect, and their customs and traditions; their dialect is a mixture of that of Bobbio and Angrogna. I was understood in using the latter dialect, and I also understood what they said. It was touching to see these simple people crowding round me, overwhelming me with questions, and more touching still, to hear them, as they turned to each other, say, in the Waldensian dialect, "*l'é nostre fraïre, a ven dal paï de nosta gent.*" (He is our brother, he comes from the country of our people.) They have carefully preserved their ancient traditions, and well know the persecutions which their fathers endured. An old priest, to whom I gave a Bible, thanked me with tears in his eyes, and said, "Thank you, it is our people's book." The people are poor, but each family has a little cottage and a small field. In the two schools I visited, I found the children seated on the ground. . . . During the whole day I have felt an emotion I cannot express."

These descendants of the Waldenses amount to about 5000 souls, scattered about the different villages mentioned above. Guardia Piemontese is the principal nucleus of this small population; and, though at present Roman Catholic, and though three hundred years have elapsed since the terrible persecution, the inhabitants have preserved a distinct physiognomy and dialect which keeps them apart from the other inhabitants of the country. Had they remained Protestant, one could understand their preserving their individuality, as in the valleys of Piedmont. But, being Roman Catholics, one might have expected them to be mingled with their neighbours, yet they live apart. Is this a mere chance result, an unimportant coincidence? or has God reserved a future for them, in view of which He has prevented them from becoming assimilated to the other inhabitants of the country? No one will wonder if we incline to the latter alternative. The explanation given by local tradition of this phenomenon is very touching. The men, and many of the women, were killed by the cruel emissaries of still more cruel inquisitors; but a certain number of the women embraced the Romish faith to save the lives of their children. To their children, when grown up, these poor mothers told the story of the massacre of their fathers, and so the remembrance of it is carried down from generation to generation, to our own day. One characteristic of these people is their deep repugnance to confession.

We cannot enter into fuller details; but I hope to be able next year to give more news of these brethren, who are Roman Catholics and yet our brothers. Ah! would that we could apply to their case the last verse of the 15th chap. of St Luke—"It is meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this, thy brother, was dead and is alive again, was lost, and is found!"

SCHOOLS.

Our schools progress well. The number of our scholars in the Sunday Schools is over 2000, and nearly as many attend our week day schools, while we have 460 young people attending our evening classes.

Had we sufficient means to prosecute Christian education on a large scale, these schools would be among the best instruments for raising our beloved country. Through their means the rising generation would be drawn away from the superstitious fanaticism which stupefies our people, and protected from a materialism still more debasing. The fact that our schools maintain their ground in spite of the bitter opposition of the priests, is an evident proof of their usefulness, and the growing esteem they enjoy. Signor Botta, a deputy of the Italian Parliament, to whom Signor Trapani, one of our teachers, was introduced, shook him heartily by the hand, and congratulated the town of Trabia on possessing an Evangelical school of which Mr T. was the master.

Viereng is a village of the Val d' Aosta, not far from Verrès. Our school there numbers twenty-three scholars. One day a little girl, hearing her mother and some other women pity the priest who had to carry the last unction (the Santissimo) to a sick man who lived on the top of the mountain, called out: "There is no need to carry up there a little god of bread, the great God of heaven and earth is there already." The horrified mother, hearing such heresy, promised solemnly to her friends and neighbours that her daughter should never again set foot in the Evangelical school. The next day the child was in her usual place. This same child has a walk of two hours in summer between her chalet and the school, and yet arrives always one of the first.

Riesi is in the centre of Sicily, seven hundred miles from Viereng. The populations of Riesi differ from that of Viereng as widely as the distance which separates them, in manners and in character; yet the gospel produces the same effect in both places. The Bishop having come to Riesi to confirm the children, a little boy of six years, and a pupil of our school, absolutely refused to submit to the ceremony. His parents employed by turns threats and caresses; all in vain; the child still refused and said, "*Mi ha cresimato Gesù Cristo, che c'entra il Vescovo?*" "Jesus has confirmed me, what has the bishop to do with it?" The parents, struck by this firmness, to them incomprehensible in a boy so young, resolved to see and judge for themselves, and have begun to attend the Evangelical service.

In the school of Catania, a new comer drew from her pocket an image of Jesus Christ, and kissed it. "What are you doing?" asked two of her companions. "I am kissing the Lord Jesus." "But the Lord Jesus is in Heaven," they replied; "and do you

not know that God's law forbids us to do these things?" The image appeared no more in school.

A new and interesting movement began this year in the schools of Catania and Naples. At Catania, the lessons turned one Sunday upon the duties which children, as well as grown-up people, owe to one another. Next morning some of the pupils approached the desk with a paper in their hands. "What do you want?" "We wish to form a society," answered the little orator of the party. "A society! really, and what is it to be called?" "*Società dei figli della pace*." (The Society of the Sons of Peace.) "That is a beautiful name; but what is your object?" "To help each other." "Excellent." "How many are you?" "Six; and we would like you to assist us in drawing up rules," a request we gladly complied with. The objects of the Society are to encourage observance of the Lord's day, to spread the Gospel, and to visit and help sick children. Each member contributes five centimes a week. Last July "the Sons of Peace" numbered forty-four, and the funds amounted to fifteen francs. The sick had been regularly visited, and boys and girls rivalled each other in zeal to fulfil their duties as members of the Society.

At Naples, too, the pastor writes: "One Sunday morning in September, the pupils of the Sunday school gave me an agreeable and touching surprise. Without being urged or advised by any grown person, they formed themselves into a Sunday Society, with the object of aiding in the development of the school. Each member promised to be present every Sunday, or to pay a fine of one sou for each absence without good reason. The fines, if there are any, go to the missionary box." The number of members has risen to fifty-six.

One smiles to think of these young creatures, from six to twelve years of age, thus banding themselves together; but at the same time, tears moisten our eyes as we exclaim, "Lord, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." May God bless these dear children, and stir up many to imitate them amongst their young compatriots! Italy is flooded with "societies" of all kinds, but there is only one "Society of the Friends of Peace" with a like object and spirit, and we find it in these humble schools of Catania and Naples. What if this were the beginning of something great? Why not? That magnificent oak was very small when the foot of a passing traveller kicked the despised acorn into a crevice of the earth. Little facts like those we have related encourage us more than we can tell. They seem to us to testify, more surely than many which make more noise in the world, to the presence of Him who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." If He be present, is not the victory assured to us at the last?

And now, we would willingly omit the remaining paragraphs from our report, were it not that necessity, which has no law,

obliges us to write them, and to ask our friends kindly to read what we write on the following subject.

Permit us, then, to tell you with all frankness of a difficulty which perplexes us very much, that, namely, of finding the funds required to sustain the work of evangelisation as it extends and grows. God has miraculously sustained us hitherto, and He will do so still ; but as He makes use of His children for this purpose, it is necessary that they should thoroughly understand the state of matters. The financial revolution which took place in Italy last year did away with the *agio* or exchange on gold (about 10 per cent.). As eight-tenths of our funds were paid us in gold, the result is a clear loss of 20,000 francs (£800) a year ; that is, while there is no falling off in the subscriptions, yet these, converted into Italian money, yield £800 less than in 1881. Generous Christian friends came to the rescue last year, and by special donations enabled us to close our books without a deficit, and we gladly take this opportunity to express our gratitude to these friends, whose names are as follows :—Robert Miller, Esq. ; E. Smith, Esq. ; J. Stevenson, Esq. ; J. White, Esq. of Overtoun ; P. Denny, Esq., Glasgow ; W. F. Burnley, Esq., Edinburgh ; Dr J. A. Campbell of Stracathro, M.P. ; Messrs Robson & Westgarth, London ; a lady in Torquay, and Miss Lennox of New York. But alas ! the same difficulty presents itself this year again, for neither the subscriptions from abroad nor the contributions from our own churches have increased so as to meet it. Nay, the difficulty is greater, seeing that we cannot go back to the same kind friends to ask for a repetition of their gifts.

In the midst of our perplexities, an encouraging letter has come to us from England. The President of our Mission Board had written to a friend to explain the state of affairs, and his letter was shown to a lady, who replied in the following terms : “I am glad of this opportunity to give something extra to the Waldenses. I thought there would have been a meeting, although I had no intention of giving the sum I enclose (£20). If you have a list of subscribers, put me down as ‘A Friend.’ As their funds will be permanently diminished, until new subscribers come forward, please make my annual subscription two or three guineas. I hope they will get their £1000, for they deserve to be esteemed and honoured. Believe me, &c., E. W. A.”

He who suggested to the writer of this letter how best to help us, may put the same generous thought into the hearts of others of His children. We have had cause to trust God in the past, for have you not, dear friends, been constant in your sympathy and support ? And has not the Lord also inclined some to give a tangible proof of their interest in the mission work of the ancient Waldensian Church by bequeathing a legacy before answering the call of the Master to join Him in the heavenly mansions ? More than once have these unexpected legacies

reached us, providentially relieving us of some embarrassment, or enabling us to respond to appeals which otherwise must necessarily have been neglected. Yes, the Lord reigneth; and He who has produced a hungering and thirsting after righteousness in the hearts of so many Italians, will not send them empty away.

Allow us to relate, in closing, the kind action of one of your own number, whose name we shall withhold for fear of hurting his modesty. Of its kind it is rare, if not unique:—This friend collects yearly for one of our schools, and contributes himself £90 a year. He has been so pleased with the good results of this school, for which he labours and prays as for a well-beloved child, that he is raising a sum to endow it. He desires that after his death his dear school may be as well supported as it is now. To love even to death! That, we may well call remarkable constancy and affection. But to love even after death!! . . .

The following is the list of “Sundays” and “Days” appropriated by churches and Christian friends, each contributing £25 a year to support the Waldensian Church Missions:—

St John's Wood Presby. Ch., London,	Rev. Dr Monro Gibson.
Hampstead do., do.,	Rev. John Matheson.
Marylebone do., do.,	Rev. Dr Fraser.
Norwood do., do.,	Rev. Robert Taylor.
Rev. Canon Fleming's Church, do.,	Church of England.
Rev. Gilbert Karney's Church, do.,	Church of England.
Sefton Park Presby. Ch., Liverpool,	Rev. John Watson.
St Thomas' Episcopal Ch., Edinburgh,	Rev. E. C. Dawson.
St Cuthbert's Church, do.,	Rev. Dr Macgregor.
St George's, do.,	Rev. Dr Scott.
Renfield Street U.P. Church, Glasgow,	Rev. Grierson Scott.
Park Church, do.,	Rev. Dr Macleod.
The Mariner's Episcopal Ch., Kingstown,	Rev. W. E. Burroughs.

S. Cameron Corbett, Esq., London,	2 days.
Hugh Matheson, Esq., do.,	1 day.
Mrs Hugh Matheson, do.,	1 „
Henry Robson, Esq., do.,	1 „
S. Williamson, Esq., M.P., do.,	1 „
Samuel Morley, Esq., M.P., do.,	1 „
Robert Miller, Esq., do.,	1 „
A. Balfour, Esq., Liverpool,	1 „
Thomas Matheson, Esq., do.,	1 „
A. Guthrie, Esq., do.,	1 „
J. A. Campbell, Esq., M.P., Stracathro,	1 „
W. F. Burnley, Esq., Edinburgh,	1 „
Miss Burnley, do.,	1 „
James Ford, Esq., do.,	1 „

W. J. Ford, Esq., Edinburgh,
 John Cowan, Esq., Beeslack,
 Miss Josephine Cowan, do.,
 W. J. Duncan, Esq., £10,
 A Friend, £10,
 J. F. Cathcart, Esq., £5,
 Robert Miller, Esq., Glasgow,

Note.—In addition to the above special contributions, two churches in Edinburgh pay the salaries of two of the pastors, each amounting to £150 per annum. Free St George's supports the Rev. G. D. Turino of Milan, and Broughton Place U.P. Church, the Rev. Aug. Malan of Messina. St George's Edinburgh (Church of Scotland) contributed more than £25 for their Sunday, the amount being £38, 17s. 8d.

Dear friends, again we thank you. May our heavenly Father give you back a hundred fold what you have done for us, in spiritual blessings on yourselves and on your churches.

(Signed by the Members of Commission.)

M. PROCHET, *President.*
 G. D. TURINO.
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 ROME, October, 1883.

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